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## Children with Special Health Needs (CSHN) Connection May 2026

AHS - VDH CSHN

11 min read

Dear Colleagues, Community Partners, and CSHN Families,

We have so much great information in this **May edition** of *CSHN Connections*! Starting with the new CSHN GIS (Geographic Information System) Map specifically for resources for CSHN families and providers. GIS is a technology or tool that uses data to manage, analyze, and create a map integrating location data and, in our case, CSHN resources into a user-friendly map.

And in honor of what will soon be summer vacation, we are also providing some “How To Eat This Summer” recommendations!

As the busy days of school wind down, we hope the summer months allow for relaxation and personal time. Time to just be and to appreciate what is meaningful to you. From one of our family partners-

Raising a child with complex needs teaches us the fragility of life on a daily basis. We may feel overwhelmed, sad, and even scared at times, but the one thing that unites us all is the love we feel for our children. Normal feels like a hard word, because all we want is for things to be normal for them while they grow in a world not yet adapted to their needs. We accept that and adapt our lives with everyday things to make it easier for us and our children. May the work we do here at CSHN pave the way for a better future for our children now and for all the children who will come into this program in the future. Never stop pushing for life to be as extraordinary as our kids are. An inspirational quote for this month’s newsletter comes from Amy Wright and is her way of expressing her deep love for her children with Down syndrome and her commitment to creating a more inclusive world for them-

“I wouldn’t change you for the world, but I would change the world for you.”

## Table of Contents

Program Spotlight: **CSHN High-Tech Nursing**  
Community Partner Spotlight: **Hunger Free Vermont**  
CSHN Updates: **CSHN GIS Resource Map**  
Resources for Families  
Policy Corner  
Community Happenings

## Program Spotlight

### CSHN Program Spotlight: Pediatric High-Tech Nursing (HTN)



### Program Highlight: Pediatric High-Tech Nursing (HTN)

Pediatric High-Tech Nursing (HTN) supports children with complex medical needs to remain safely at home by authorizing private duty nursing. This Medicaid program serves children who require ongoing nursing assessment and intervention from a licensed nurse (RN or LPN).

Children eligible for HTN rely on medical technology and ongoing skilled nursing care to maintain their health and safety, including tracheostomy care, ventilator support, oxygen, and seizure rescue medications.

By supporting care in the home, HTN helps improve quality of life for children and families while reducing the need for hospital-based care.

For more information and referral form visit our website: [Pediatric High-Tech Nursing | Vermont Department of Health](#)

Please contact Zenaida Kim with any questions at [Zenaida.kim@vermont.gov](mailto:Zenaida.kim@vermont.gov).

CSHN also has Care Consultants to help you. Want to reach the CSHN Care Consultant for your area? Local contact info is available on our website: [CSHN Service Area](#).

## Community Partner Spotlight: Hunger Free Vermont

### Hunger Free Vermont

Hunger Free Vermont is an organization whose mission is to end the injustice of hunger in Vermont. They prioritize helping the people most affected by hunger through permanent systemic change. The work is guided by the belief that we all deserve access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food. Hunger Free Vermont protects and helps to expand federal nutrition and meal programs. They also work to remove the barriers to these programs at the local, state, regional, and federal levels to increase awareness and promote more access to food programs.

Hunger Free Vermont operates under the belief that to end hunger, we must address the systems that hold hunger in place and for that reason they advocate for policies that create both food security and economic security. Hunger Free Vermont proudly works in partnership with other advocacy groups in Vermont to achieve food and economic security for Vermonters.

For general information about Hunger Free Vermont visit them online at [Hunger Free Vermont](#)

Specific food resources can be found on their website at: [GET FOOD HELP — Hunger Free Vermont](#)

## CSHN Updates: CSHN GIS Resource Map



Map with 5 red ball pins stuck into map.

## Our CSHN GIS Resource Map is here!

Check this out! Vermont Department of Health's - Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs launched a Geographic Information System (GIS) Resource digital guide and map. This resource can be found on the CSHN webpage by clicking on the blue [CSHN GIS Resource Map](#) button.

The **CSHN GIS Resource Map** includes searchable listings of regional, statewide, and county organizations that families and providers may need. Content categories include: Autism, Care Consultants, Designated Agencies, Education, Medical, Organizations, Planning for Adulthood, Resources by County, and Statewide Services.

Users can filter searches by type of organization or location, services provided, and so on. Direct links to websites, email contact, and Google driving maps are additional features listed for each organization. At the bottom of each page, you can suggest edits, additions or updated organization information. Our teams will review suggestions and make changes.

We hope you find this resource helpful!

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## Resources for Families



Youth with long brown hair covering their face with hands.

## Sensory Awareness for Upcoming Summer Events

Loud crowded hot summer fun is coming! If you or a family member suffers from sensory issues, anxiety, PTSD or changes to routines, then fireworks or loud parties or parades can lead to problems. As the United States gears up for a raucous 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary summer, now may be a good time to plan for potential sensory interruptions or to make plans for alternative outings.

Here are some handy resources that might help:

[Helping Children with Sensory Issues Cope with Fireworks](#) by The Autism Clinic

[Why Fireworks Trigger Sensory Overload in Autism and 5 Proactive Coping Strategies](#) in Simply Psychology

[How to Handle Sensory Overload in Large Crowds](#) by Brightside ABA

[Tips for Going Places with Sensory-Challenged Kids](#) by Child Mind Institute

For more **Summer Safety** tips and resources, view our [CSHN Connections July 2025](#) issue.

**Parenting is Hard!**  
Everyone can use support.

Find safe spaces where kids can explore and parents and caregivers can connect to share ideas.

**PLAYGROUPS** are free, informal gatherings where children and caregivers connect with their community. These fun and safe activities are open to all families.  
**Drop in and join us!**

★★★★★  
"I've loved learning about the Circle, better understanding my son's needs. I want to shout from the rooftops how wonderful this is. Everyone should take it."

**CIRCLE OF SECURITY** Parenting series provides a supportive space to strengthen your relationship with your child.  
**Join a free in-person or virtual series.**

SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING LOCALLY:  
uvcaregiverconnections.org

**UPPER VALLEY  
PLAYGROUP & CAREGIVER  
CONNECTIONS**

Colorful flyer for Upper Valley Playgroups and Caregiver Connections.

After years of collaboration on Playgroups, **Circle of Security**, and regional family serving agencies have built a website where you can find programs and other child/parent/caregiver/family events that are open to all families in the Upper Valley and surrounding communities on one website: [Home - Upper Valley Playgroup & Caregiver Connections](#)

Traditional referral partners, e.g., libraries and pediatric offices, and non-traditional referral partners, e.g., coffee shops, hair salons, can all use this same site to direct families to opportunities to create an informal connection to the childhood system. Families can use the contact page to self-select the Agency that serves their town to connect further about

additional family resources.

Another similar resource is [find & go seek](#) for the western side of Vermont. This is an open source forum to list playgroups, art camps or clubs events, all kinds of activities for families listed by interest or age.

**Summer Camps:** Sure, it's late in the season to sign up for summer camps. However, we still want folks to know about **Vermont Family Network's** great listing of [summer camps](#). This expansive resource has general and specific camp types along with camps for various age ranges. There might be some available slots or information to help you start planning for next year's camping options.

**Confident Kids Campaign:** Hey school nurses and families! The "[Confident Kids](#)" campaign encourages parents and caregivers to use supportive language about food, bodies, and movement to help children build confidence and develop healthy relationships with food and movement. The "[Confident Kids](#)" page offers resources to help adults learn how the language we use can contribute to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. It offers language tips that adults can use to change the conversation. Please reach out to [ahs.vdhfchconfidentkids@vermont.gov](mailto:ahs.vdhfchconfidentkids@vermont.gov) with any questions.

## Summer food sources, information:

- **Hunger Free Vermont** along with the USDA have a school-based summer meal site map that will be updated in June to include Vermont's [summer meal sites](#). Keep an eye on that link for more information as it becomes available.
- Intervale Center **Fair Share program** in Burlington supports members of the community who struggle to access fresh food. [Fair Share program](#) sign-ups started in mid-April. If you don't receive their emails, contact [gabby@intervale.org](mailto:gabby@intervale.org) or call 802-660-0440 ext. 120 for questions or sign-up information.
- **Farm to Family** helps WIC recipients buy fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs at participating farmers markets or farm stands. Contact your [Local Health Offices | Vermont Department of Health](#) to apply. The application process begins July 1st and is first come first serve basis. Coupons expire October 31.
- Did you know...almost all **hospitals in Vermont** list their local communities **free food sources or food banks** on their websites? Using your favorite web browser, type in the hospital name along with "food resources". Often that search will lead viewers to a page with local food information. Some hospitals' Community Health workers might be available to work with folks to find food sources.

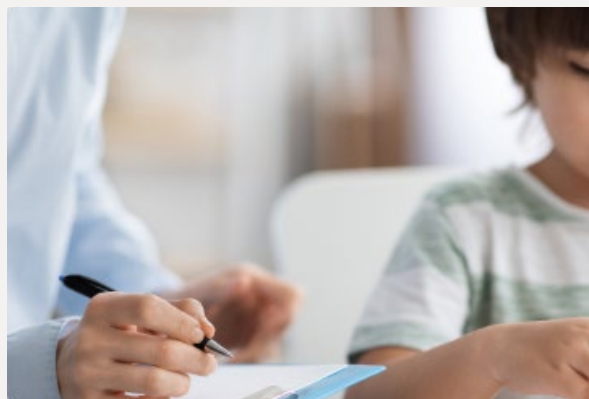
## Did you know...?

Vermont's Department of Health has many newsletters, not just the CSHN Connections newsletter? Ever wonder how to find out about more health-related newsletters? The [Health Department Newsletter webpage](#) shows latest publicly available newsletters from

programs around Vermont.

**Please consider sharing these resources with the families you serve and others at your organizations.**

## Policy Corner



Child playing with colorful blocks, adult writing notes on a clipboard.

### Vermont Policy Updates

In the April Medicaid Banner, Published Date April 17, 2026, there's a notice about **Non-Covered Enteral Supplies for Pediatric Members**.

Open the link to [Gainwell Banner](#) for details if this is a billing component you use.

**GCR 25-081 Update** Children's Integrated Services Value-Based Payment Model Update.

Effective January 1, 2026, Vermont Medicaid continued the VBP component in the CIS program. [GCR 25-081](#) describes the Payment Arrangement Provider Performance Measures Table in greater detail.

**GCR Final Policy 26-003** Effective January 1, 2026, the [Resource-Based Relative Value Scale \(RBRVS\) Fee Schedule Update](#) from DVHA was posted for professional fee schedule. The link provides a pdf with detailed information.

**GCR Final Policy 26-021** Northeastern Family Institute (NFI) Payment Model

The NFI value based payment (VBP) model documenting changes to performance measures is updated effective January 1, 2026. [GCR 26-021](#) has changes to performance measures. The Payment Arrangement Provider Performance Measures Table is also in that linked pdf.

### **GCR Final Policy 26-022** Mental Health Case Rate Payment Model Update

Vermont Medicaid program has extended the current value-based payment model. Updates to the performance measures became effective January 1, 2026. [GCR 26-022](#) contains more details.

### **GCR Final Policy 26-024** Developmental Disabilities Services Program Value-Based Payment Model Update

Effective January 1, 2026. Vermont Medicaid extended the VBP model for Developmental Disabilities (DDS) program. Read [GCR Final Policy 26-024](#) for detailed information about the adjustments to this performance measure set.

**GCR Final Policy 26-025** [Brattleboro Retreat Alternative Payment Model](#) Final Policy is effective January 1, 2026. This Vermont Medicaid program continues the Brattleboro Retreat prospective payment model for inpatient psychiatric services.

**GCR Final Policy 26-026** is a [Rate Update for Crisis Beds](#) at Rutland Mental Health Services. This includes the cost of nursing staff related to treatment services, Crisis Stabilization and Inpatient Diversion (CSID).

**GCR Final Policy 26-030** Effective January 1, 2026, the Final Policy for [Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment](#) Value-Based Payment Model is continued through Vermont Medicaid. This includes 3 performance measures. See BCR 25-106 for information about the underlying episodic rates for substance use residential treatment.

**GCR Final Policy 26-049** This [Financial Eligibility Standards](#) for Green Mount Care and MAGI-based Medicaid Final Policy is effective April 1, 2026. These are two updated for financial eligibility standards for health care programs.

### **Changes – Medicaid Member Enrollment**

Federal rules are bringing changes to how some people apply for or stay enrolled in Medicaid, beginning in 2027. The Department of Vermont Health Access or DVHA has a new section on their website called [Federal Medicaid Changes: Vermont Impact](#). That site provides information about changes. Their website includes a Medicaid Work Requirements Screening Tool.

Want to be added to **email notifications for Global Commitment waivers?**  
(Recommendation: If don't want to flood your Inbox, perhaps choose one person in

your office or team to receive the emails for everyone.)  
Please email [AHS.MedicaidPolicy@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.MedicaidPolicy@vermont.gov).

## Community Happenings

[2026 Health Equity Summit | University of Vermont Health](#) will be September 24 thru September 25 this year. This all day summit will take place at the University of Vermont Davis Center. Contact [hesummit@uvmhealth.org](mailto:hesummit@uvmhealth.org) for more information. We will include more registration information in our next CSHN newsletter as it becomes available.

### Free Day-Use Entry to Vermont State Parks this year!



**Free Day-Use Entry to Vermont State Parks for Eligible Vermonters Again in 2026!**  
Available May to October

**Eligibility**  
Eligible Vermonters include those enrolled in:

- 3SquaresVT
- Essential Person Program
- Fuel Assistance
- General Assistance
- Reach Up
- Summer EBT
- WIC

**Using the Benefit**  
If you have an EBT or WIC card with active benefits: Bring this card to a state park and you and your household will get in free for the day. **Camping and equipment rentals not included.**

**Enrolled but don't have an EBT card?**  
Visit your local Economic Services District Office to receive an ESD card that can be used for state park entrance this year or call 1-800-479-6151 to request one be mailed to you.



Scan now! Learn more about this privately funded program.  
[VermontParksForever.org/paf-pilot](http://VermontParksForever.org/paf-pilot)

VERMONT PARKS FOREVER  
VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES ECONOMIC SERVICES DIVISION

Flyer with accessing benefits information. Picture child standing in water throwing a rock.

**All Brains Belong** recently had a 5th annual webinar “**Shifting the Autism Narrative: The Impact of Stigma on Health**” presented by Dr. Mel Houser.

Autistic people have a reduced life expectancy by as much as 36 years, with leading causes of death being premature cardiovascular disease and suicide. Extensive research shows that

Autistic people are dissatisfied with their healthcare and experience significant barriers in accessing care. During this webinar, we'll take a closer look at barriers to healthcare access, hidden contributors to stigma, and very simple things that healthcare providers and community allies can do to improve the health of Autistic patients.

You can access the recording by donation. 100% of donations support All Brains Belong's free community programs and discounted medical care for kids and adults.

[Here is the link to access the recording.](#)

## More Vermont happenings:

Statewide:

- [Long Trail Club- Accessible List](#) – Looking for ways to get outside? Check out this list of trails and boardwalks throughout Vermont accessible by car or wheelchair.
  - Don't forget about [Vermont Days](#), the second weekend in June! Free admission to day-use areas at Vermont State Parks and State-owned historic sites.
- Summer is Farm to Family season! Farm to Family gives WIC families coupons for free, locally grown, fresh vegetables and fruits from participating farmers markets and farm stands. Starting July 1, coupons will be available on a first-come, first-served basis to WIC participants aged 4 months and older, valued at \$30 per booklet. Come to a fun Farm to Family Activity to get your coupons. These activities also count towards your WIC Nutrition Activity. See you this summer!

Find Farm to Family Activities: [WIC Nutrition | Vermont Department of Health](#)

Learn more about Farm to Family: [Farm to Family | Department for Children and Families](#)

- Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports [Summer Programs](#) include a variety of activities. Scholarships may be available.

Chittenden County:

- Family comedy day: [Vermont Comedy Club | Good Clean Fun \(Family Friendly Show\)!](#) – An interactive and FUN improvised comedy show for the whole family! Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 5pm. Children \$5, Adults \$10.
- [Green Mountain Adaptive Sports](#) – Spring and Summer activities are starting (skateboarding and kayaking) and other activities are continuing ( indoor rock climbing, swimming). Scholarship opportunities may be available.
  - Swimming is offered in Burlington, White River Junction, Berlin, and Stowe

Washington County:

- Together Day: Sunday June 28<sup>th</sup>, 12-2 – hosted by [Green Mountain Adaptive Sports](#)
  - Join us for a cookout, and lawn games as we celebrate all that we have

accomplished together in the past months. The event will be held at the Hope Davey Park and Pavilion in Waterbury Center. Please RSVP on website.

Windsor County:

- [Quechee Hot Air Balloon Festival](#) – June 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>. Tickets are sold as weekend passes - Children 4-12 \$5, Adults \$25
- **Special Needs Support Center** in White River Junction is holding their Happenings [Semi-Formal Dance](#) for ages 18+ on June 5, 6-8pm at the Bugbee Senior Center. Contact SNSC for more information and directions.

Grand Isle County:

- [Champlain Adaptive Mounted Program \(Champ\) | Therapeutic Riding | 57 East Shore Road, South Hero, VT, USA](#) – Adapted horseback riding. They offer the opportunity to apply for scholarships.

Caledonia, Essex, & Orleans Counties:

- [Adaptive Sports Partners](#) – Spring and Summer activities are happening through Adaptive Sports Partners! Adaptive Mountain Biking (Kingdom Trails), Hiking (Northeast Kingdom), Biking (Lamoille Valley Rail Trail), and Kayaking (Northeast Kingdom)

If you need help accessing or understanding information in this newsletter, contact [AHS.VDHCSHN@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.VDHCSHN@vermont.gov).

CSHN supports children with complex, chronic health conditions and/or developmental disorders, ages birth to-21, and their families, with flexible, experienced, and proactive services. If you'd like to learn more about CSHN programming and resources, please see the [CSHN Website](#).

Do you have feedback or content for this newsletter? Please [let us know!](#)



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